

VU Research Portal

Praying Like the Catholics?

Dyck, A.E.

2017

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

Dyck, A. E. (2017). *Praying Like the Catholics? Enriching Canadian Mennonite Brethren Spirituality through Spiritual Direction, Lectio Divina, and the Taizé Community*. [PhD-Thesis - Research and graduation internal, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam].

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

E-mail address:

vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl

Abstract***Praying Like the Catholics? Enriching Canadian Mennonite Brethren Spirituality
through Spiritual Direction, Lectio Divina, and the Taizé Community***

In this dissertation, I address the question of how one group of Protestant evangelicals—Mennonite Brethren in Canada—can draw organically on spiritual practices coming from other Christian traditions. This question is significant in light of the discussions among North American evangelicals about the appropriateness of adopting spiritual disciplines from Christians—such as Catholics—whom Protestants have at times viewed with criticism and suspicion. Seeking an enriched spiritual life, some Mennonite Brethren have learned the previously unfamiliar practices of spiritual direction, *lectio divina*, and Taizé singing, while other Mennonite Brethren have criticized this development.

In keeping with the academic discipline of Christian spirituality, I employ an interdisciplinary methodology consisting of a comparative inter-textual analysis based on a close reading of texts describing experiences and practices that Christians associate with their life with God. Drawing on historical and contemporary resources, I provide a critical historical survey of Mennonite Brethren life. That survey—unique to this study—shows that conversion, scripture reading, and singing have been central features of Mennonite Brethren spirituality, even as the experiences, practices, and theological understandings associated with these three continually developed after the denomination's founding in 1860. I go on to examine founding and contemporary expressions of spiritual life within the Ignatian tradition, the Benedictine tradition, and the Taizé Christian Community because these are like roots for the spiritual direction, *lectio divina*, and Taizé singing being practiced by some Mennonite Brethren. In light of the ways that these practices and their sources have influenced Mennonite Brethren, I consider how these three practices can be organically appropriated, so that Mennonite Brethren can honour and live faithfully to their historical past—as the other three Christian traditions and communities do—while also remaining open to new possibilities for living richly in the life of the Spirit.

It is my contention that this investigation can help Christian groups engage with each other's diverse practices and traditions in ways that will foster unity within the Body of Christ.